

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03634 302033Z
ACTION NEA-11

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R 300830Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO USDOC WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
USINT BAGHDAD
USLO RIYADH
SECSTATE WASHDC 8495

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: BEXP XF TU
SUBJ: FEB 79 CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT SPECIALIZED TRADE MISSION

REF: (A) USDOC 11337, (B) USDOC 10391

1. REF A REQUESTS EXPRESSION OF EMBASSY BEIRUT WILLINGNESS TO
HOST ALL OR SOME ELEMENTS OF SUBJECT TRADE MISSION IN FEB.
1979, IN PLACE OF OMAN, AND GENERAL OPINION OF RESTARTING
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TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS IN LEBANON AFTER THREE-YEAR BREAK.

2. ALTHOUGH IN PRINCIPLE WE LIKE THE IDEA OF HOSTING AT
LEAST SOME MEMBERS OF THE SUBJECT MISSION, WE CANNOT
COMMIT OURSELVES AT THIS TIME. THE SECURITY SITUATION
IN LEBANON REMAINS UNPREDICTABLE AND VOLATILE, AND WE
CANNOT HAZARD A FORECAST ON THE SITUATION THAT MIGHT

OBTAIN NEXT FEBRUARY. AS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR, LEBANESE RECONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN SLOW TO GAIN MOMENTUM BUT INDICATIONS OF POTENTIALLY MORE RAPID MOVEMENT OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS HAVE SURFACED THIS QUARTER AND WE ARE AT LEAST MOMENTARILY ENCOURAGED BY THEM. POLITICAL CLIMATE REMAINS THE FINAL ARBITER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS HERE, HOWEVER, AND IT IS HEAVILY OVERCAST AT PRESENT. A SMALL, SELECTED MISSION FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF A FINAL GO/NO-GO DECISION IN LATE JANUARY WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO LOCAL CONDITIONS.

3. RE ACTIVITIES BY OTHER COUNTRIES, USDOC/CAGNE MAY HAVE RECEIVED A MISLEADING PICTURE. WHILE BRITISH AND GERMANS HAVE IN RECENT MONTHS SENT DELEGATIONS NUMBERING SEVERAL MEN EACH TO DISCUSS TRADE WITH APPROPRIATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND GOL FIGURES, THESE WERE BASICALLY HANDSHAKE VISITS, NOT "TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS." THE FRENCH SENT IN A TEAM JUNE 1-3 TO SIGN A LARGE COMMERCIAL PROTOCOL AIMED AT STIMULATING LEBANESE PURCHASES OF FRENCH EXPORTS, BUT NO PUBLIC EVENTS WERE CONNECTED WITH THE VISIT. NO ONE HAS HELD A SIGNIFICANT TRADE FAIR IN LEBANON SINCE THE WAR, AND WE JUDGE THE TIME TOO EARLY STILL TO DO IT OR TO PREDICT WE CAN DO IT IN 1979. ANYTHING PLANNED BY OTHER COUNTRIES WE MAY BE CERTAIN IS TENTATIVE, AND PRIVATE PROMOTIONS (WILLIAM BAZZY'S INTELCOM '78, FOR EXAMPLE) HAVE ENCOUNTERED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEEP RELUCTANCE HERE OWING TO CLOUDED SECURITY OUTLOOK.

4. IN SUM, LEBANON IS ENDURING A DIFFICULT PASSAGE THESE DAYS AND MAY YET FOR SOME MONTHS. WE ARE NOT BADLY ADVISED TO PLAY IT SAFE UNTIL THINGS IMPROVE MEANWHILE, OUR TRADE IS EXPANDING NICELY EVEN WITHOUT T(E HELP OF FORMAL PROMOTIONS THANKS TO THE MANY TIES LINKING AMERICAN AND LEBANESE TRADERS. USDOC FIGURES JUST POUCHED TO US SHOW U.S. EXPORTS TO LEBANON HAVE TRIPLED SINCE LAST YEAR.

DECONTROL 6/30/80.
PARKER

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